pears to be in excess of the optimum level. The need for improvement of the performance of the State Electricity Boards has been stressed to the States, time and again, in various forums of discussions, suggesting steps like equity participation by the State Government, provision of specific grants to meet the losses for supply of power to the agricultural sector, periodical revision of tariff, improving the performance of generating stations, reducing Transmission and Distribution losses, so that they could at least earn the statutory minimum return of 3 per cent.

Withdrawal of Private Drilling Com panics from ONGC Operations

34. DR NARREDDY THULASI REDDY: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the private drilling companies on contract with ONGC are contemplating to withdraw from drilling operations;

(b) if so, what are the names of the companies which have withdrawn/propose to withdraw from the drilling operations;

(c) what are the reasons therefor;

(d) what is the estimated crude oil production likely to come down as a consequence thereof;

(e) the estimated quantity (with cost in foreign exchange) that would be required to import in order to meet the difference in production; and

(f) what steps have been taken by Government to resolve the impasse with the private drilling companies?

THE MINISTER OP PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI B. SHANKARANAND): (a) to (c) No company on contract for drilling services has withdrawn nor has any intimation been received from them in this regard.

(d) to (f) Do not arise.

DESU Losing Crores Every Month

35. SHRI HARVENDRA SINGH HANSPAL: Will the Minister of POWER AND NON-CONVENTIONAL ENERGY SOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the attention of Government have been drawn to a newsitem captioned "DESU losing crores every month" as reported in the 'Indian Express' of the 9th August, 1991;

(b) if so, whether the DESU has changed its billing system from bimonthly to four monthly meter reading system;

(c) whether it is a fact that due to four monthly meter reading system, the consumption of energy is mostly misused by unscrupulous consumers; and

(d) if so, what steps Government propose to take to rectify the situations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) OF THE MINISTRY OF POWER AND NON-CONVENTIONAL ENERGY SOURCES (SHRI KALP NATH RAI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Under the present system of DESU, bills to the domestic consu mers are sent on bi-monthly basis and to the non-domestic/industrial consumers on monthly basis. A bill on actual meter reading basis is pre pared every four months and a bill on provisional basis is sent in between for two months based on Past consump tion in the case of domestic consumers. The system of four monthly meter reading has been adopted by DESU due to the shortage of Meter Readers.

(c) According to DESU, the system of four monthly reading of meters in respect of domestic consumers does not specifically lead to misuse of en ergy as a Four-digit Meter can record